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Leadership Cares- U.S. Fleet Forces Hosts Mental Health Summit

BY VJOHNSON – FEBRUARY 6, 2015

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By Mass Communication Specialist Second Class Jonathan E. Donnelly

U.S. Fleet Forces Command hosted a three-day Fleet Mental Health Summit aboard Naval Support Activity, Hampton Roads in Norfolk, Va. January, 26-28.



Capt. Mary Neill speaks during the Fleet Mental Health Summit at U.S. Fleet Forces Command. The summit brought together subject matter experts and representatives from U.S. Fleet Forces Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander, Navy Installations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, Commander, Naval Personnel Command, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery as well as members of the Fleet Mental Health Work Group to discuss the current successes of mental health, establish partnerships, network, share ideas, best practices and resources. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist Second Class Benjamin Dobbs)

“For the first time, we’ve taken everybody that holds a piece of the spiritual or mental health puzzle and put them all in one room in an effort to come up with an optimized plan to meet and increase the benefits we offer our Sailors on the waterfront,” said CAPT James Hancock, Fleet Surgeon. “Part of providing seamless mental health is getting every subject matter expert in one place at the same time to standardize processes in a collaborative effort.”

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Fleet Surgeon, Capt. James Hancock speaks during the Fleet Mental Health Summit at U.S. Fleet Forces Command. The summit brought together subject matter experts and representatives from U.S. Fleet Forces Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander, Navy Installations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, Commander, Naval Personnel Command, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery as well as members of the Fleet Mental Health Work Group to discuss the current successes of mental health, establish partnerships, network, share ideas, best practices and resources. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist Second Class Benjamin Dobbs)

The main emphasis of the summit focused on the development of holistic access to mental health services and efforts to streamline the healing pipeline process. There has been a significant increase in the amount of Sailors utilizing available resources and seeking assistance for mental health concerns. Sailors need the means to fulfill their spiritual, physical and mental health needs in an accessible way. Leadership has recognized the demand for more convenient access closer to the deckplates.

“We’re striving for a variety of mental health services that are coordinated, interconnected and without redundancies or gaps,” said Adm. Elaine Wagner, Deputy Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Wounded, Ill and Injured. “We have to ensure that all hands, from our TYCOM’s to our junior Sailors, can operate in a synchronized way to communicate and deliver consistent and compassionate mental health services to the fleet.”

Military OneSource, Family Life, and Deployment Resiliency Counselors will be added to the Mental Health Team (MHT). This will bring the Department of Defense- sponsored programs for non-medical counseling services under one roof. The goal is to offer access to the collective mental health care package at any time or place to meet the Sailor or family member’s needs and become an organization moving from intervention to prevention.

Getting the data to support and building a good case for funding of mental health providers on ships that are deploying has been difficult, added Hancock. A major effort of the summit was figuring out how to optimize the people and resources that are currently in place.

“Our number one goal this year is to solve the funding issue to ensure our sailors have immediate access to mental health care with any encumbrance.” said Hancock. “We have to figure this issue out if we want to get left of destructive behavior now and in the future. Senior leadership across the Navy realizes there is still a stigma associated with the mental health portion, and if left unattended can lead to loss of mission capability or worse, loss of life.



Capt. Mary Neill speaks during the Fleet Mental Health Summit at U.S. Fleet Forces Command as the facilitator Mr. Patrick Modglin, NHRC Liaison looks on. The summit brought together subject matter experts and representatives from U.S. Fleet Forces Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander, Navy Installations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, Commander, Naval Personnel Command, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery as well as members of the Fleet Mental Health Work Group to discuss the current successes of mental health, establish partnerships, network, share ideas, best practices and resources. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist Second Class Benjamin Dobbs)

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Leadership is aware, talking, and working toward action to address any flaws and remove the burden to the Sailor.



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